

Message Text

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ACTION CU-04

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4908

UNCLAS PRETORIA 3117

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AFSP, SF, RH

SUBJECT: VAN WINKEL CASE

REF: STATE 172788

FOR CU/AF (CRUNP) FROM EDMONDSON

1. REGRET DELAY IN REPLY OWING TO MISUNDERSTANDING ON PART OF DCM TO WHOM INVESTIGATION WAS REFERRED WHILE STILL IN CAPE TOWN.

2. BURDEN OF COMPLAINT MADE BY WILLIAM VAN WINKEL, AMCIT RETIRED USAF MAJOR WHO WHOR A TIME RESIDENT AS A MISSIONARY IN RHODESIA, APPEAR TO BE THAT HE WROTE LETTER TO AMBASSADOR IN PRETORIA AND RECEIVED NO REPLY, THAT ARMY ATTACHE WAS DISCOURTEOUS ON TELEPHONE, THAT MR. VAN WINKEL WAS WRONGLY REFUSED SPACE-AVAILABLE TRANSPORTATION FROM JOHANNESBURG TO THE US ON USAF SPECIAL MISEION AIRCRAFT WHICH SUPPORTS AIR FORCE EASTERN TEST RANGE (AFETR) AND THAT OFFICIAL USG COMMUNITY FAILED TO "LIFT A LITTLE FINGER" TO SPARE LIVES OF VAN WINKEL AND HIS WIFE.

3. UPON INVESTIGATION IT APPEARS CIRCUMSTANCES WERE DIFFERNT THAN CHARACTERIZED BY VAN WINKEL. LETTER OF FEBRUARY 14 TO AMBASSADOR (WHO WAS IN CAPETOWN AT THE TIME) WAS FORWARDED TO APPROPRIATE OFFICIAL WHO, BECAUSE OF TIME ELEMENT, DETERMINED THAT TELEPHONIC RESPONSE AND FOLLOW UP WERE NECESSARY. (VAN WINKEL IN FACT PROVIDED TELEPHONE NUMBER FOR THIS PURPOSE) MEANWHILE, VAN WINKEL UNCLASSIFIED

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HAD TELEPHONED EMBASSY AND REQUESTED SPACE ON NEXT USAF

FLIGHT OUT OF JOHANNESBURG. DAO INITIATED NECESSARY REQUEST FOR AUTHORWY AND WAS REMINDED THAT PERMISSION TO TRAVEL ON THES
PECIAL FLIGHTS IS NOT GRANTED EXCEPT FOR
"BONA FIDE EMERGENCIES, HUMANITARIAN REASONS OR OTHER
UNIQUE CIRCUMDNCS CONSIDERED TO BE IN THE BEST INTERESTS
OF THE GOVERNMENT"-

REPLY INDICATED THAT VAN WINKEL
HAD REQUESTED TRAVEL FROM US TO SA IN JULY 1975 AND WAS
TURNED DOWN.

4. ACTING DATT, AFTER SEVERAL UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORTS GOT THROUGH TO VAN WINKEL BY PHONE EARLY ON FEBRUARY 27 TO ASK ABOUT CIRCUMSTANCES ON WHICH VAN WINKEL BASED HIS REQUEST. VAN WINKEL BECAME SOMEWHAT EMOTIONAL WHEN ASKED THIS, CLAIMED THERE WAS GOING TO BE A "BLOOD BATH" IN RHODESIA AND EXPRESSED FEAR FOR HIS LIFE. HE WAS NOT VERY SPECIFIC, HOWEVER, AND TOOK OFFENSE WHEN ACTING DATT EXPLAINED THAT WHILE HIS REQUEST TO FLY ON THE AFETR PLANE WOULD BE REVIEWED CAREFULLY, IT WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO BE DENIED IF HE COULD NOT DETAIL THE PRECISE DANGERS WHICH HE FEARED. ZAN WINKEL SEEMED TO RESENT QUESTIONS ACTING DATT POSED TO DETERMINE THE FACTS AND NATURE OF THE EMERGENCY THREAT WHICH VAN WINKEL PERCEIVED.

5. IN VIEW OF THE LACK OF ANY APPARENT JUSTIFICATION FOR VAN WINKEL'S REQUEST, ACTING DATT AFTER CONSULTATION WITH OFFICER IN CHARGE OF EMBASSY OFFICE IN PRETORIA DECIDED TO INFORM AFET THAT REQUEST SHOULD BE DENIED. LATER SAME DAY FEBRUARY 27, ACTING DATT AND EMBASSY DECIDED TO REVERSE THIS DECISION, BECAUSE, DESPITE LACK OF ANY CLEAR CUT INDICATION OF IMMEDIATE DANGER, VAN WINKEL'S ATTITUDE AND STATE OF MIND SEEMED TO BE SUCH THAT HIS EXPEDITIOUS DEPARTURE FROM RHODESIA WOULD BE IN USG AND HIS OWN BEST INTERESTS. ATTEMPTS TO PHONE HIM AT NUMBER PROVEDED WERE UNSUCCESSFUL, HOWEVER, UNTIL ABOUT 4 PM FEBRUARY 27 AT WHICH TIME AN UNIDENTIFIED LADY ANSWERED AND SAID THAT MR VAN WINKEL HAD ALREADY DEPARTED FOR THE US AND SHE HAD NO IDEA WHERE OR HOW TO CONTACT HIM. SINCE VAN WINKEL HAD EARLIER STATED HIS CHURCH COULD PAY HIS FARE BACK TO US, MATTER WAS CONSIDERED CLOSED.
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6. ALTHOUGH VAN WINKEL FEELS NO ONE WAS WILLING TO HELP HIM, EMBASSY AND DAO DID IN FACT GO TO CONSIDERABLE TROUBLE THAT HE WAS UNAWARE OF IN EFFORT TO DETERMINE WHETHER AND HOW HE COULD BE ASSISTED. WE REGRET THAT HE APPARENTLY CONSIDERED NORMAL QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS CIRCUMSTANCES TO INDICATE DOUBT ABOUT HIS VERACITY OR LACK OF CONCERN ABOUT HIS SITUATION.

7. MAY BE PERTINENT TO NOTE THAT VAN WINKEL RESIDED IN RHODESIA FOR SOME TIME DESPITE EARLIER NOTICES TO AMCITS THAT US HAS NO REPRESENTATION OR FACILITIES THERE FOR PROTECTION OF AMERICANS. HIS CLAIM OF RIGHT TO SPACE AVAILABLE TRAVEL ON USAF PLANE MUST BE VIEWED IN LIGHT OF FACT THAT THIS SPECIAL MISSION AIRCRAFT IS NOT PERMITTED TO ACCEPT ROUTE SPACE-AVAILABLE BOOKINGS. WHILE EXCEPTIONS TO THIS RESTRICTION CAN BE MADE, VAN WINKEL SEEMED UNABLE PROVIDE ANY FACTUAL INFORMATION TO EXPLAIN HIS CLAIM THAT HIS LIFE WAS IN DANGER. IN ANY EVENT THERE APPEARED NO SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHY HE COULD NOT TAKE IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTATION.

8. MORE DETAILED REPORT ON OUR INVESTIGATION INTO THIS CASE BEING POUCHED, ALTHOUGH BELIEVE FOREGOING PROVIDES ALL ESSENTIALS NEEDED FOR REPLY.
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